

REPORT

THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

IN COMPLIANCE WITH

A resolution of the Senate, relative to the expediency of requiring vessels navigating the Delaware river to carry lights, to avoid the danger of collision.

FEBRUARY 26, 1846.

Referred to the Committee on Commerce, and ordered to be printed.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,

February 25, 1846.

SIR: In obedience to a resolution of the Senate, directing this department to communicate such information as it can obtain, "on the expediency of providing by law that ships and vessels navigating the river Delaware shall carry lights, to avoid the danger of collision," I have the honor to state, that, immediately on the receipt of the resolution, the department addressed letters to the collectors at Philadelphia and Wilmington, directing them to confer with persons interested in the subject, and to report the result of such conferences.

I have the honor now to enclose, herewith, copies of their letters in reply, from which it will appear that the measure proposed in the resolution is deemed expedient and proper.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, sir, your obedient servant,

R. J. WALKER,

Secretary of the Treasury.

Hon. GEO. M. DALLAS,

*Vice President of the United States, and
President of the Senate.*

COLLECTOR'S OFFICE,

Philadelphia, February 11, 1846.

SIR: I have had the honor of receiving your letter of the 4th, enclosing a resolution of the Senate of the 3d instant, requiring information as to the expediency of providing by law "that ships and vessels navigating the river Delaware shall carry lights, to avoid the danger of collision."

Having, in pursuance of your instructions, instituted the necessary inquiries in the matter, among the merchants, mariners, and underwriters here, I am brought to the conclusion that, while the proposed law could not

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possibly be injurious, it would probably be beneficial to the commerce of our port. Many of the vessels navigating the river Delaware are now, and have long been, in the habit of carrying lights when the nights are dark; and it would seem to be clearly the interest of all navigators to do so; yet, as I am informed, many instances of damage from collision have occurred, from the want of lights on board of vessels in the Delaware. One company of underwriters here have informed me that they alone had to pay more than ten thousand dollars for accidents of this nature.

It has been stated to me that there is a provision, by an act of our legislature, upon this subject. I have, nevertheless, been unable to find any such act; and if it should really exist, it can operate only so far as the jurisdiction of Pennsylvania over the river Delaware extends; leaving the jurisdictions of New Jersey and Delaware to be provided for by those States respectively.

Legislative action on the subject by the general government, to which it appears of right to belong, would, therefore, in my judgment, be most expedient and proper.

Very respectfully, I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

HENRY HORN,

Collector.

HON. ROBERT J. WALKER,

Secretary of the Treasury.

COLLECTOR'S OFFICE, WILMINGTON, DELAWARE,
February 24, 1846.

SIR: Your letter of the 4th instant, enclosing a copy of a resolution of the Senate of the United States relating to the expediency of causing vessels navigating the river Delaware to carry lights, to avoid collision, came duly to hand. Immediately upon the receipt of your instructions, I addressed the chairman of the board of underwriters, at Philadelphia, and a number of merchants and owners of vessels, and received written replies from four of them, which I now have the honor to enclose. But it was not until this morning that I received the views of the chairman of the board of underwriters, and which being contained in a letter addressed to me on another subject, I can only extract the part that relates to this subject, and which is in the words following, to wit:

"PHILADELPHIA, February 23, 1846.

"SIR: Your favors of the 6th and 12th instant came to hand whilst I was confined to my room at home by indisposition, and no one else deemed authorized to reply. I am now recovered.

"As to the proposed law to compel vessels navigating the Delaware at night to carry lights, such a law might be of use; but, practically, there does not seem to me to be so much necessity for it, as the captains and pilots know, that by commercial usage they, the vessels, are liable for damage in case of collision, if they have no light.

"JOSHUA EMLIN,

"Chairman Board of Underwriters.

"HENRY HICKS, Esq.,

"Collector, Wilmington, Delaware."

Your letter of the 23d is received just upon the eve of making this communication.

I have the honor to be, most respectfully, your obedient servant,
HENRY HICKS, *Collector.*

Hon. R. J. WALKER,
Secretary of the Treasury.

SMYRNA, February 13, 1846.

DEAR SIR: Your favor 11th instant was duly received, and now has my attention. I am fully and certainly persuaded much advantage would flow from a law authorizing and requiring all vessels navigating the *Delaware* in the night to carry lights, or a conspicuous light. It would seem to me that the benefits to be derived from such a regulation are so plain, and the measure would receive such *general* approval, I cannot deem it at all necessary for me to make further remark upon the subject. I must, however, confess my ignorance in acknowledging that I thought there existed such a law, and was of the impression that vessels running at night had for years past carried lights.

I am, very respectfully, your friend,

GEO. W. CUMMINS.

HENRY HICKS, Esq.

BRANDYWINE, February 12, 1846.

DEAR SIR: Yours of the 11th inst., with "Senate" resolution annexed, regarding the expediency of "compelling vessels navigating the river Delaware to carry lights," is received. We highly approve of this measure, and fully believe it will be the means of saving a large amount of property, and also of lives.

There is a rapid increase in the number of vessels navigating the river Delaware, and the danger of "collision" is daily becoming greater.

Yours truly,

TATNALL & LEE.

HENRY HICKS, Esq.,
Collector for the port of Wilmington.

WILMINGTON, February 13, 1846.

DEAR SIR: From what I have experienced in navigating the Delaware river at night, it is my opinion that a law obliging *all* vessels *running* or *at anchor* during the night to carry a good light in some specified part of their rigging, would not only be a proper one, but one that I consider entirely necessary, in order to run with safety.

I believe that all steamboats running at night have for some time past carried one or two lights.

Very respectfully, yours,

CHARLES WARNER,

Owner of steamboat "Dupont."

HENRY HICKS, Esq.,
Collector for the port of Wilmington.

WILMINGTON, February 16, 1846.

DEAR SIR: I received your favor of the 11th inst., covering resolution of the Senate of the United States, calling on the Secretary of the Treasury for information in regard to the utility of vessels navigating the waters of the Delaware bay and river carrying lights at night, to avoid collision, &c. All vessels should be compelled to keep a light at, say fifteen feet above deck, at foremast, while laying at anchor, or lying to; but while under way, I do not feel at liberty to say whether it would be of any utility; whether, if lights be carried while under way, it would not cause considerable confusion, and be more likely to cause collision than be the means of avoiding it.

I remain, dear sir, with respect, your obedient servant,

JEREMIAH W. DUNCAN.

HENRY HICKS, Esq.,

Collector of the port of Wilmington.

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Owner of steamboat "Dugout."

Henry Hicks, Esq.

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